

EXECUTIVE INFLUENCE.

SPEECH

OF

MR. GIDDINGS, OF OHIO,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MARCH 16, 1854,

On the Message of the President of the United States upon our Relations with Spain.

Mr. GIDDINGS said:

Mr. SPEAKER: When I heard this message read last evening, I expected some political friend of the Executive would have called the attention of the House to its extraordinary character. To my humble judgment, it appeared a duty which they owed to themselves and to the country. When they failed to discharge that obligation, as I conceived it to be, I looked to those who had acted with the Whig party in opposing the election of the present Executive for an exposure of the important avowals contained in this remarkable State paper. But, they, too, have passed it over in silence, and I am constrained to permit it to go forth to the country without examination in this body, to whom it is addressed, or I must attempt that duty, which I hold to be imperative on us as representatives of the people.

Sir, an American steamer called the *Black Warrior*, (perhaps the name is ominous,) cleared from the port of Mobile for New York by way of Havana, some time in February, having four or five hundred bales of cotton on board. On arriving at Havana, she was reported by her commander "in ballast." This report is acknowledged to have been false, and in violation of the laws of Spain. The revenue officers of Cuba, finding these cotton bales on board, and not mentioned in the manifest, regarded the transaction illegal, as it is acknowledged to have been, and seized the goods.

The law under which the seizure took place is one in substance adopted by all commercial nations, as necessary to the protection of their revenues. It was applied by the Cuban authorities to all other nations; and goods on board many other American vessels are said to have been seized in the same manner. Thus far there is nothing unusual in the transaction. The occurrence is one which happens almost daily in the commercial ports of our own country. The Cunard steamers of Britain have at all times been subjected to a similar law in our ports; and on more than one occasion they have been seized for its violation. One of them was taken possession of by our revenue officers in New York, and another in Boston,

since Congress assembled, under circumstances similar to those attending the seizure of the *Black Warrior*, and the goods on board those ships not mentioned in the manifest were condemned and sold, and, I believe, the captains fined; yet we hear no complaint, no special message of the British Crown has been sent to Parliament in regard to those transactions, which are of almost daily occurrence among commercial nations.

It is, however, said, that this regulation in Cuba had been suspended; and it is also alleged that it had been found necessary to revive it, and that two months' notice of such revival had been given, and that such notice had been specially communicated to the officers of the steamer whose goods were seized. Of these disputed facts we know comparatively nothing, and must leave them until we hear from the Spanish Government. Yet, some editors appear to have taken a deep interest in the subject, and spoken of it as an unusual proceeding, and an encroachment upon our commerce.

A member of this body, desirous of obtaining all the information on this subject which could be arrived at, presented a resolution in the ordinary form, calling on the President for the facts of the case so far as they were in possession of the Department of State. This was also in the ordinary course of business; no member objected; all were willing to place the truth before the country, so far as we were able to ascertain it.

In response to this call, the President transmitted copies of all papers in the Executive office relating to this affair; and in the first paragraph of his message accompanying the papers says:

"In compliance with the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 13th instant, I herewith transmit a report of the Secretary of State, containing all the information received at the Department in relation to the seizure of the *Black Warrior* at Havana, on the 28th ultimo."

This was a full and perfect response to our call. It was given in the ordinary form, and thus far was in accordance with the usages which for half a century, indeed from the commencement of the Government, have guided the intercourse between this body and the Executive. Here the President leaves the case of the *Black Warrior*.

Having answered our request, he could go no further on that subject until he heard from the Spanish Government, whose opinions and feelings in relation to the affair he has taken measures to ascertain. Here, sir, I leave it. I pass no judgment upon the case. It may be one in which Government should demand reparation, and it may not. If it be such as to call for the interposition of our national influence, I would unhesitatingly demand the reparation in the usual form and in the ordinary course. If not, I would let it pass as we do other cases of that character.

But, Mr. Speaker, my business is with the other portions of the message; those which speak of matters not called for by us, those comments which are thrust upon us in violation of the usages which have heretofore characterized the intercourse between the Executive and this representative body—to comments and avowals of policy sent here without invitation, and in violation of all former practice. This message is not directed to Congress, but to this House. He makes no suggestions to the legislative power of the nation under the Constitution; gives no information to Congress on the state of the Union, as the Constitution authorizes, but sends to this House papers relating to the seizure of goods on board the Black Warrior, in compliance with our demand, and seizes that opportunity to say:

"There have been, in the course of a few years past, many other instances of aggression upon our commerce, violations of the rights of American citizens, and insults to the national flag by the Spanish authorities in Cuba; and all attempts to obtain redress have been protracted by fruitless negotiations. The documents in these cases have been voluminous, and when prepared will be sent to Congress.

This language can be no otherwise than offensive to Spain. That Government is charged, not merely with acts of aggression upon our commerce, and violations of the rights of our citizens, but with unqualified "*insults to our flag.*"

The language is not only offensive to Spain, but it contains a severe condemnation of past Administrations, who appear to have been unconscious of such insults.

Sir, I did not assist in the election of Mr. Polk, nor of General Taylor. The friends of neither of those Administrations would look to me for a vindication of their course in regard to our relations with Spain, or with any other foreign Government. It is, however, certain that neither of those Executives ever demanded of the Crown of Spain any apology or explanation for *insulting our flag*. Neither of them surely ever did, or would complain of such insult, until he had demanded explanation from Spain. Which of those Executives submitted to insult? When and where was such insult offered? Sir, the imputation upon this body is more direct. When have we, the representatives of the people, quietly and silently pocketed insults to our flag from any nation, particularly from the crown of Spain? I deny that such insults have been given.

I need not say what every intelligent man in the United States well knows, that during the entire Administration of Mr. Polk he diligently watched our intercourse with Spain; and, as I believe, and as I think every member of this House believes, sought some justifiable cause for war with that Government, in order to wrest from her the Island of Cuba. In saying this, I would do no

injustice to Mr. Polk. We all know that under his directions our Minister offered the Spanish crown one hundred million of dollars to purchase that long-coveted dependency. We are conscious that past Administrations have been exceedingly desirous to obtain possession of that fairest jewel that ever graced the diadem of an European Queen. For the last quarter of a century we have possessed the power at any moment to capture it; yet no President, no Congress, has been willing to seize it, by brute force, without provocation. We are, however, conscious that no President would have suffered Spain to insult our flag with impunity, nor would this House have silently borne such insult. The imputation was uncalled for; and, as I view the matter, was unworthy of the Chief Magistrate of the nation.

Neither the Constitution nor usage justifies this attempt to excite in us unfriendly feelings towards a neighboring Government. We come from the people; we hold our commissions from them; they are our masters, and when they speak we are bound to listen with respect. We are not dependent on the Executive; he is our servant, bound to execute our laws, to obey our directions, and not to read lectures here to tell us that we have silently borne insults from Her Christian Majesty of Spain. Does he attempt to excite our indignation, and through this body to stir up the people to war? That is the obvious tendency of these charges.

Why, sir, the Government of Spain is at this moment as unconscious of these complaints as it is of matters now transpiring in this body. No complaint has been made by the Executive to Her Majesty, nor to her Ministers. The President is unable to say whether that Government will or will not do us perfect and complete justice. But one thing we all know, that Spanish Ministers can have no possible object in withholding justice from us. No Minister of Spain, no member of her executive council, or of her legislative body, can find the least possible motive for any act disrespectful to this nation. They are conscious, as well as ourselves, that they can gain nothing by a war with us. They may lose everything; but they cannot profit by such an event.

Why, then, does the President send these complaints to us before he presents them to Spain? Why charge her with *insulting our flag* before he demands the proper apology from her Majesty? It would hardly be courteous to say that the President wished to make this House the forum from which to harangue the people who are his political creators. No; we will suppose he intended his message for ourselves. Still, however supine and neglectful he may regard us, we are unwilling to admit ourselves so oblivious to the public interest as to need lectures from a coordinate branch of Government. We possess powers of thought as well as the President, though perhaps not to the same extent. Still, when we want information from him relative to the past history of our Government we will call on him for it; or, if we desire an essay upon Spanish encroachments we surely will invite it.

It is certain that those who elected us expected we would use our own brains, and not feel entirely dependent on the Executive to do our thinking. I am myself an older man than he is. I have served longer in this body than he has, and feel as competent to judge of my duties as the

President is to judge for me. Nor can I silently permit him thus to assume a prerogative with which the Constitution has not clothed him, and which is in violation of the established practice which has hitherto characterized the intercourse between the Executive and this branch of Congress.

Sir, let the President confine the exercise of his influence to the legitimate sphere marked out by the Constitution and by the experience of the past, and we will look to the discharge of our own duties. If we fail in that respect, those who sent us here will correct the evil by sending others to fill our places.

I wish that every member of this body would lend his efforts to maintain that line of demarkation which separates our duties from those of the Executive. I desire to see that line made clear, and rendered, if possible, more plain and obvious.

We know that a matter of absorbing interest now agitates the public mind. It has taken a strong hold of the popular feeling; it is continually extending and becoming more intense, until it now sets Executive influence and partisan control at defiance. In truth, the scepter of power appears to have departed from the President, in consequence of his attempts to wield it for the extension of slavery into Nebraska and Kansas. In putting forth his influence for the attainment of that barbarous policy, he overstepped his legitimate powers, he violated the spirit of the Constitution, and has called up the indignation of the people of the free States against him. That feeling was exhibited in the most unmistakable form in New York the evening before last, and in Philadelphia but a day or two since. It was emphatically expressed in the earnest remonstrance of more than three thousand clergymen of New England, presented to the Senate on Monday; it is proclaimed from thousands of papers, and almost numberless public meetings; it is uttered in every log cabin of the West, and in the more comfortable dwellings of the North and East; it is repeated at the prayer meeting and in political gatherings; it is the voice of humanity, coming forth from the heart of the nation. Like the voice of the Almighty to the rich man, it comes to the Executive, saying, "*This night shall thy political soul be required of thee.*"

That sentence he attempts to evade by seeking to turn the popular mind from opposing the extension of slavery into our own free territory to a war which he more than intimates shall be waged for maintaining it in Cuba. But I must examine the several parts of the message as I pass along. The paragraph just quoted, after informing us that there are other cases of aggression on our commerce, tells us that the "documents relating to them have been voluminous, and when prepared will be sent to Congress."

Sir, who has called for those papers? Neither the people nor their representatives have asked for them. By what authority does he thrust them upon us, or ask us to turn aside from the business of legislation to listen to them? Whenever we desire them we will call for them. Until we request them let them remain where they are; or, if the President sends them to this Hall, without authority, and unasked, I would most respectfully return them without breaking the seal.

Sir, in my opinion the time has come when members of this body should reject all improper inter-

ference from the White House. Let us adopt the President's motto of "*non-intervention*;" let us feel a little of that spirit of "*self-government*" of which we hear so much. We have almost ceased to be a Representative Legislature. Executive influence is brought to bear on almost all our action. Congress is becoming the mere register of the Executive will. He now seeks to influence us by charges and complaints against the weak, imbecile Government of Spain; to arouse here a feeling of hostility towards the young "*Lady of Castile*." It is with difficulty that I can express my views on this subject in language becoming the place. For really, it appears to me that any gallant, any generous man, would as soon strike a woman as he would make war on Spain. Of that Government we have no more reason to fear, as a nation, than the President has to dread personal injury at the hands of the girl on whose head the bauble crown of that kingdom has been placed.

But the President complains still further, saying:

"The offending party is at our doors with large powers for aggression, but none, it is alleged, for reparation. The source of redress is in another hemisphere, and the answers to our just complaints made to the home Government are but the repetition of excuses rendered by inferior officials to their superiors in reply to representations of misconduct."

The same complaint may be made against this Government by any one of the South American Republics. California is much further from Washington than Cuba is from Madrid. Our officers possess the same power to seize vessels or goods for a breach of our revenue laws as that held by the officers of Cuba. They do, in fact, seize vessels in precisely the same manner as the Black Warrior was seized. Those officers, however, possess no more authority to adjust such claims than do those of Cuba. Suppose, therefore, the Government of Colombia or Chili should make the same complaint against us which the President now utters against Spain, and should demand of us the adjustment of those claims in San Francisco—would we comply? Nations, sir, should "*do unto others as we would have others do unto us.*" The rule is as imperative on Governments as it is on individuals. And I refer to this portion of the message as illustrating the disposition of the President to excite unfriendly feelings toward Spain.

These complaints and charges are not communicated in answer to our call for documents touching the Black Warrior, but they are brought forward as introductory to a paragraph which was intended to constitute the leading and prominent feature, the gist, the *gravamen* of this extraordinary message, which is expressed in the following language:

"In view of the position of Cuba, its proximity to our coast, the relations which it must ever bear to our commercial and other interests—it is in vain to expect that a series of unfriendly acts infringing our commercial rights, and the adoption of a policy threatening the honor and security of these States, can long consist with peaceful relations."

Now, sir, no intelligent man can believe that Spain cherishes any hostile purpose to our commerce that shall give us cause for war. We are all aware that she depends on her alliance with France and England for security and safety. Every intelligent Spaniard, and Frenchman, and Englishman, as well as American, knows that those Powers will

neither justify nor support Spain in any aggression upon the commerce of the United States, or of any other nation. They can have no possible motive to do that. Those Powers are too enlightened, possess too much intelligence, to enter upon a war with any nation, unless actually compelled to do so in defense of their own integrity or honor. All, therefore, which is said in regard to our commercial rights is merely to disguise the subsequent expressions. By "*other interests*" he refers to the interests of southern slavery; and by speaking of "*the adoption of a policy threatening the honor and security of these States*," he refers to the policy of emancipating the slaves of that island.

It is well known, that by adopting a system of freeing the "emancipadoes," as those Africans are called who have been imported in violation of law, by limiting the price of slaves, and by importing Chinese and African laborers who shall become free at a certain period, slavery must, at some distant day, cease to exist. And the declaration that Cuba cannot *peacefully* oppose our slave interests by adopting this policy of emancipation, constitutes the object, the ulterior design of the whole message, except merely the first paragraph, which relates to the Black Warrior. This announcement of the President's design to wage a war with Spain, and France, and England, to prevent the progress of liberty, of civilization in Cuba, is clear and unmistakable. "He who runs may read." Not a member of this body can mistake or misunderstand it. No intelligent man of the nation can mistake it. It is the language held forth through the columns of the Executive organ in this city almost daily for the past six months. That paper has been burdened with essays exhorting this nation to war, in order to stay the progress of Cuban emancipation. Many of those articles are said to have been written by officers high in the confidence of the Executive. Such, too, has been the tone and language of most southern papers. They have appeared exceedingly anxious on this subject. One of those papers is before me; and I read from the *Fairfield* (South Carolina) Herald, as follows:

"Cuba is overlooked, Nebraska is fought for, and what will be the result of the fight? The future alone can tell. Both of these countries are about being snatched from the South; the loss of the latter would be but a slight restriction to slavery, while the former, in the hands of emancipated blacks, or of foreign Powers determined to emancipate, would be a total loss to the commerce of the world, and a death-blow to the extension of slavery."

This is but a specimen. Southern papers have teemed with similar articles for the past year. Almost constant efforts have been made, through those papers and the Union of this city, to excite a spirit of hostility against Cuba in consequence of this *policy* of emancipation to which the President refers.

We have seen it stated in the public press, that resolutions are now pending, or have been introduced, into one of the States of this Union, complaining of the Executive of the United States for his non-interference to prevent emancipation in Cuba. I refer to the Legislature of Louisiana.

Mr. PERKINS, of Louisiana, (interrupting.) I should like to correct the gentleman as to that point.

Mr. GIDDINGS. I will hear the gentleman with pleasure.

Mr. PERKINS. The Legislature of Louisiana

is not even in session. Such resolutions were introduced and laid upon the table when it was in session.

Mr. GIDDINGS. Well, such resolutions were offered when it was in session.

Mr. JONES, of Louisiana. Will the gentleman allow me to interrupt him for a moment?

Mr. GIDDINGS. Certainly; I wish gentlemen to understand that when they desire to interrupt me, I yield the floor most cheerfully for any correction.

Mr. JONES. I understand that the gentleman has said that he has been informed through the public press that resolutions are before the Legislature of Louisiana, complaining of the President, and denouncing him for not interfering to arrest the progress of civilization in Cuba. I tell that gentleman, sir, that I do not believe, in the first place, that he has seen any such statement in the public prints, and I say, further, that all such statements are false.

Mr. GIDDINGS. I am very happy to hear this explanation. Gentlemen will not disturb my temper or ruffle my feelings when they tell me I am wrong. No, sir; set me right. If I have done injustice to Louisiana I recall it. The member last up, however, was not quite as polite to me as I would have been to him, when he said he did not believe I had seen the statement in the papers. I tell him that I have seen it, and that he has no authority to tell me that I have not seen it.

Mr. JONES sought the floor.

Mr. GIDDINGS. No; I do not yield to the gentleman. When a man tells me that he does not believe what I assert on this floor, I do not listen to him a second time. When a gentleman treats me with propriety I will treat him with forbearance; but when a gentleman says he does not believe my word I have done with him. I desire no further interchange of civilities with him. The colleague of the gentleman, however, confirms all I had stated. The whole object of these remarks is to explain the "*policy*" of Cuba, to which the President refers as "*threatening the honor and security of these States*." No friend of the Executive will doubt or deny that he refers to the progress of emancipation in that island.

The object in making this extraordinary announcement is to inform the people of the southern States that the powers of this Government are to be exerted to prevent the progress of freedom in that neighboring colony of Spain, to turn back the tide of civilization, to maintain and continue the moral and political desolation which now broods over that fairest portion of Western India.

And the President declares this progress of freedom in Cuba to be "*threatening the honor and security of these States*." Is it possible that the security of this Republic depends on the continuance of human servitude in Cuba? Is our honor founded upon maintaining the barbarous institution of slavery in that island? Such appears to be the opinion of the President, but I trust it is the opinion of no other northern man. I thank him, however, for the avowal; I rejoice that he thus makes his views officially known to the nation. In this I regard him as perfectly consistent with himself, with the doctrines avowed in his inaugural address. He then declared that he recognized the institutions of slavery in the southern States as standing upon the same basis as other nec-

OGNIZED RIGHTS, and equally entitled to the support and protection of the Federal Government. I speak from recollection, and do not repeat the language, but am certain I express the precise ideas which the President put forth. He holds that this Government, with all its mighty powers; with all its unlimited energies; with its character; with all its moral, its political, and physical influence, is bound to uphold and protect the barbarous institutions of African slavery in the southern States and in Cuba.

This declaration is in perfect keeping with his efforts to extend it over the Nebraska and Kansas Territories. It is true he has made no public official declaration of his desire to subject those Territories to its blighting curse. But through the official organ in this city, and other Administration papers, we are assured that such is the fact. His confidential friends assert it; and I think no member of this body, and few men in the nation, entertain any doubt of his devotion to the extension of slavery in our own territory, and its maintenance in Cuba. I will not doubt his sincerity, however much he may differ from my own views. I am now looking to his policy as a perfect system; one which he is evidently intending to carry out, so far as his influence extends. He has, doubtless, reflected maturely on the subject, for he assures us that this "policy of Cuba cannot long consist with peaceful relations to these States."

This language cannot be misunderstood; we are to have war with Cuba, not on account of the seizure of the cotton on board the Black Warrior, but to forestall emancipation, to stay the progress of liberty there. To me the idea of war is dreadful; to see human beings engage in the work of slaying each other is revolting to all the feelings of my heart; but the plan of sending American citizens to die on the soil of Cuba, in order to prevent the abolition of slavery must chill the blood of all who seriously reflect upon the subject. Sir, the proposition strikes every Christian and philanthropist with horror.

Will the President himself go there and die on the battle field to stay the progress of freedom? Would he send that only son of his, if now living, to such an inglorious death? Which member of his Cabinet would be willing to offer up his life, or the life of his son, upon the altar of Cuban slavery? Will he ask the people of the free States to do that at which his own feelings revolt, at which humanity shudders, at which Christianity hides her face?

Why, sir, this policy of the President, when reduced to plain and obvious language, is this: Cuba is improving the moral and physical condition of her people; her rulers are looking forward to the day when oppression shall cease in that island; when intelligence shall become general, and Christianity shall prevail, and her whole population become elevated and happy. But that policy is threatening to destroy the system of oppression now practiced in our slave States, and must be opposed by the whole power of the nation. Our Army must be increased; our Navy enlarged; all the paraphernalia of war must be provided, and our military and naval forces must go and fight for the overthrow of this policy in Cuba, and maintain the oppression that now exists there; keep up her barracks; sustain her slave markets; defend the degradation of our race;

let the smoke of our cannon form a cloud so dense that no ray of civilization can penetrate it; let moral darkness reign there forever.

These are the views substantially expressed in the message. They have no relation to the Black Warrior; they constitute the development of the Executive intentions relative to the civilization and Christianization of Cuba. It is a more startling policy than was ever avowed by any previous Executive of this nation. It is an open declaration of war upon the Constitution of our country, upon human liberty, upon God's law. If carried out, it will constitute a *revolution*, a total overthrow of the objects and designs for which our Government was founded, an entire subversion of the essential principles on which it was based.

After avowing these doctrines, the President says:

"I suggest to Congress the propriety of adopting such provisional measures as the exigencies of the case may seem to demand."

In plain language, he asks us to bestow on him powers, to give him an army and a navy, and funds, to carry his views into practical effect.

Sir, I prefer to meet this doctrine promptly, at its first distinct enunciation. It is revolutionary in its inception, and treasonable in its tendencies. It strikes at the vitalizing principles which brought our nation into existence, at the life-giving energies which established our independence.

Mr. Speaker, the day has passed when members were permitted to hesitate in exposing such sentiments and doctrines. The efforts of the President and his political friends to trample upon the solemn compact of 1820; to violate the pledged faith of the nation in order to blight our own free soil with the curse of human servitude, has shown to us and to the people his devotion to the slave power. We are not permitted to close our eyes to the obvious intentions of the Executive heart, when thus avowed. I speak not for others; but for me to hold my peace would, in my judgment, be criminal. Were I to fail in doing whatever lies within my power to notify the people of the danger, I should be wanting in fidelity to the Constitution. We must meet the foes of freedom boldly, whether we find them in the high places of the nation or in the humbler walks of life.

I am aware that many honest men regard the cry of war as popular. They think the great body of the American people will draw no distinction between a war waged for the maintenance of slavery, and one that is begun and carried on in defense of our own freedom. I, sir, entertain no such views. I have a perfect and abiding faith in the intelligence and virtue of the people; and if our statesmen will stand forth boldly in the maintenance of truth and justice, I assure gentlemen the people will do their duty. Sir, no intelligent man in the United States believes that Spain, weak and imbecile as she is, will wantonly provoke a war with us. She knows as well as we do that if her officers encroach upon our commercial rights, we possess the power to compel reparation at any moment. Every public man in Spain and in the United States is also conscious that this Government will protect its rights and the rights of its citizens at all times. But if, under the pretense of obtaining indemnity for a few bales of cotton seized on board the Black Warrior, we proceed to fit out a navy, to raise and equip an

army, to invade Cuba, no man in Spain or in the United States will hesitate to declare the conquest of that island and the continuance of African servitude to be our object.

If we now sit silent, we shall hereafter be told that we tacitly consented to this avowed policy of the President. I will not subject myself to such imputations. The people of this nation must not be cheated into a war against the liberties of Cuba, under the pretense that it is done to obtain indemnity for the seizure of a steamboat.

I am aware that some gentlemen think this attempt to get up a war with Spain is put forth to divert the popular mind from the great subject which now attracts such general attention throughout these States. I look upon it as a part of the same general policy. We know it is so regarded by the southern press. The extracts to which I have referred, the President's inaugural address, and the message before us, give proof of the boldest, the most daring plot for revolutionizing this Government ever put forth by any man or any party. I am aware that gentlemen say I am ultra in my views. I speak *to-day*; history will speak when I am gone. I ask gentlemen to wait but a few months, or a few years, before they pass judgment upon the propriety of my course. I appeal to our successors for the accuracy of my opinions.

The demonstration of northern sentiment now exhibited in regard to Nebraska and Kansas is a manifestation of the popular love of liberty. Do gentlemen believe that can be turned to the support of a war on human rights in Cuba? I tell you nay. The people will hurl back the proposition as insulting to their intelligence. They will be consistent, whatever may be the tergiversations of public men.

It is this northern feeling, this devotion to freedom, that has already disrobed the President of his moral, and, in a great degree, of his political power. Although he came into office with such a large majority, he can no longer control it. Unless all the signs of the times mislead us, another short year will place in these Halls a larger majority against him than that which sympathized with him when he entered upon his Executive duties. The handwriting is already seen upon the wall, announcing that he has been "*weighed in the balance and found wanting.*"

To him and to his friends who are desirous of a war with Cuba, I would say, that from present indications their time is short. The places which now know them will soon know them politically no more forever. If they involve the nation in a war, their successors will prosecute and carry it forward, or make peace, as to them shall appear just and reasonable. Let them therefore move cautiously.

Sir, the time selected for getting up this war is important. We are conscious that France and England are said to have guaranteed to Spain the integrity of her West India possessions—that a war on Cuba will be a war on France and England, as well as on Spain. Those two Powers are now employed in defending the national independence of Turkey. They now present a great moral spectacle to the world. The Cross and the Crescent are floating together, intertwining their folds in the same breeze. The Christian and the Turk stand shoulder to shoulder, conflicting with Rus-

sian despotism; and while France and England are thus employed, we are called on to strike them in the back, and secure Cuba to ourselves, thereby aiding the advance of Russian tyranny. That is neither generous nor honorable. I am opposed to becoming an ally to Russia in that conflict. I am opposed to involving our nation in the wars of Europe. This is a time when we ought to study peace, and, so far as able, take advantage of those commercial benefits which European hostilities will place in our hands; and I shall be astonished if the commercial influence of New York and New England is not turned to the maintenance of peace at such a crisis as the present. Their interests, as well as those of humanity, require it.

Nor will a war for the conquest of Cuba prove any child's play. The combined navies of England and of France will present to us a force not to be despised. They will surround Cuba with a wall of iron, and a sheet of flame. They will prove themselves worthy of our steel. Once relieved from their European employment, they will have an army which may be easily thrown upon our southern coast, wherever they may deem it most assailable. They will doubtless strike at our weakest points. They may bring the war into this American Africa, and rear the standard of freedom on our own soil, while our army shall be fighting for slavery in Cuba. It is right that southern gentlemen should look at this subject in all its aspects. If they go to war under the black flag of oppression, they should count the cost. If they should find an army of twenty thousand British and French troops in South Carolina, or Georgia, rearing the standard of liberty, and their slaves flocking to it, they must understand that our northern militia will comprehend the cause of such war. They may not hasten as rapidly to mingle in the fight with slaves armed with foreign muskets, and commanded by foreign officers, as men would who feel a deep interest in the prosperity of the "peculiar institution." They may perhaps feel some disposition to let our southern friends taste the chalice which they have themselves prepared for others. Sir, when that contest shall come, if ever it do come, they may bear in mind that the slaves of our southern States will feel the emotions of manhood stirring them to action; they will contend for the rights which God has bestowed upon them. And when the storm of war shall rage, and masters shall tremble as they behold their dwellings in flames, we of the North may not "laugh at your calamity, nor mock when you fear cometh;" but we will tender to those slaves their God-given right to liberty, as the terms of peace which we shall then be authorized to grant.

It is acknowledged, on all sides, that when such war shall exist, this Government may interpose terms of peace, even at the price of liberating every slave in the nation. I announce these facts to northern men to inspire them to deeds of manly bearing—that no one may despond, though war shall actually come. Although the thunder roll and the lightning flash, let us stand unmoved upon the rock of truth, battling for the right. I mention these things that southern men may understand that we have examined the subject and counted the cost. If they push the present weak and almost irresponsible Executive into a war to maintain Cuban slavery, they should bear in mind that there is a Power above us that may direct

that war to the emancipation of slavery in our own States. Nor would such a result prove any unusual interposition of God's providence.

I would call the attention of all concerned to the policy heretofore adopted by the officers of Cuba, under the direction of the Spanish Government. I refer to the declared intention to emancipate all their slaves and put arms in their hands, so soon as a hostile army of force shall land upon their soil. The policy of such a course cannot be doubted. It would not only protect the island, but would render the real estate more valuable than both land and slaves now are. Those emancipated slaves, when contending for their homes and families, their lives and liberties, would constitute a force both savage and powerful. There would be but little honor or glory in fighting with them, in order to reduce them to bondage. To die in battle by the hands of Spanish "emancipados" would constitute a romance but little coveted by American soldiers. Yet, such will be the forces with which our army must contend if it enters upon Cuban soil.

Thus, sir, I can easily imagine that this war which the President invokes may prove the overthrow of slavery in Cuba as well as in our own land. Such results would best accord with the feelings, the desires of the free States, and of the whole Christian world, as well as with the spirit of the age in which we live. I may find myself in error, but I feel deeply conscious that if such a war should result from these efforts of the slave power, that institution will be consumed by the flame which itself will have kindled. So confident am I on this point, that were I to disregard the suffering and misery with which such a war must be attended, I would not interpose an objection to the course which the President has marked out in the message before us.

Sir, I should be blind to the teachings of history were I to close my eyes to this tendency of that law which shapes the destinies of nations, overruling the councils of aspiring men to the advancement and elevation of our race. Look at Napoleon, with his half million of troops; an army flushed with expectations of conquest; commanded by the ablest veterans the world ever knew; clothed and provided with everything necessary to success. They literally "looked down all opposition;" victory after victory attended their progress. They reached the capital of Russia; no enemy could withstand their march. But they were unable to contend with nature's elements. They were driven from Moscow by fire. The snows descended and blocked up their pathway, and the frost laid their proudest warriors low. That mighty army dwindled rapidly away: whole regiments were buried in the snows of Russia, and Europe's conqueror returned almost unattended to his solitary throne, from which he was soon driven to die on a barren rock in the far off ocean.

Why, sir, it is but a few years since we were plunged into a war with Mexico, for the openly-

avowed object of extending slavery. Northern men were alarmed, and many of them voted for the war, thinking it would be unpopular to oppose it. The war was prosecuted. Eighty thousand human victims were sacrificed, and a vast territory conquered. But have the advocates of that war realized the advantages which they anticipated from our proposed conquests? Has it not promoted the extension of freedom instead of slavery? More than \$200,000,000 were expended, and more than eighty thousand human victims sacrificed, with the expectation that slavery would be rendered more potent. And now behold, we have a free State on the Pacific. Civilization has been promoted, free institutions extended, and there is very little probability that the bounds of slavery will in any degree be enlarged by that vast expenditure of blood and treasure. Our western Ophir is pouring its golden streams into the free States, while the inhabitants of the slave States are able to participate but sparingly in its advantages. Similar results, I trust, will follow any disturbance of the peaceful relations between us and Spain.

Mr. Speaker, these attempts of the President contrast but poorly with the liberal and generous spirit of Spain manifested towards those piratical invaders of her soil, who, in violation of our laws, and the law of nations, left these States, and attempted, of their own authority, the conquest of that island. When captured by the Cuban troops, they pleaded that they were "American citizens;" and, although their lives were forfeited by the law of nations, they were, at the request of this Government, spared, and sent back to their native land; yet the Slave power, and the Executive, now propose to effect, by the strong arm of the nation, the object which those "filibusters" attempted in vain.

Mr. Speaker, I have long mingled in these conflicts with the Slave power, as it has sought to extend its dominions. The people of the free States have moved tardily in the support of their rights, and the rights of humanity. Yet the cause of truth and freedom has advanced steadily onward. In proportion as the love of liberty became developed in the North, we have vainly attempted here to restrain it by gag rules, by denial of the right of petition, by trampling on the freedom of debate, by legislative enactments, and statutory compromises. But the work has moved forward with steady and unflinching pace. Since we assembled in this Hall it has been greatly accelerated in its progress by efforts of the Executive, and the Senate, to silence the voice of humanity, of truth and justice, by placing feeble words on paper, in the form of "an act of Congress." It has now become a conflict between the people and Congress, aided by the Executive. The contest is unequal. We cannot maintain it. We must bow to the popular will, to the voice of justice, to the demands of civilization and of Christianity. They are all speaking to us through ten thousand agencies. They utter the voice of Nature, and of Nature's God. *We must obey.*